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Plastic pollution choking planet: U.N. secy-general

On the eve of World Environment Day, Antonio Guterres called for an urgent need to control the menace of plastics. Sounding an alarm, Guterres said: "Plastic pollution is harming ecosystems, well-being, and climate. Plastic waste clogs rivers, pollutes oceans, and endangers wildlife. It infiltrates every corner of Earth: from the top of Mount Everest, to the depths of the ocean; from human brains; to human breastmilk... this needs to end"

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Rescue operation on after the stampede at the Chinnaswamy Stadium, the venue of RCB IPL victory celebration, in Bengaluru on Wednesday | NAGARAJA GADEKAL

CATASTROPHE STRIKES ROYAL CELEBRATIONS

11 DEAD IN STAMPEDE

Dozens injured as desperate fans try to enter Chinnaswamy Stadium for the grand function

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE victory celebrations of Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), which won the 18th edition of the Indian Premier League title on Tuesday, turned tragic with 11 fans dying in a horrible stampede at the Chinnaswamy Stadium gates late Wednesday afternoon. They were trying to enter the stadium to participate in the celebrations. At least 47 sustained injuries, with some in critical condition being treated in hospitals in the neighbourhood.

The stampede occurred when an estimated 3 lakh-strong crowd gathered near Chinnaswamy Stadium, which has a seating capacity of just 35,000. The trigger for such a large crowd converging on the stadium was an announcement put out on RCB's official social media handle about free entry passes.

While a crowd of about 1 lakh had gathered to witness the felicitation of the RCB team on the grand steps of Vidhana Soudha at 5pm, where Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar were present, three times that crowd had rushed to Chinnaswamy Stadium hardly a kilometre away, to participate in the grand celebrations scheduled just an hour later. The stampede at Chinnaswamy Stadium occurred between 3.45pm and 4.15pm, before the felicitation at Vidhana Soudha took place.

It is also said that a few among the one-lakh-strong crowd at Vidhana Soudha had fainted when the felicitation by the state government was on. Rain also played spoilsport during the felicitation, when the RCB team was taken inside the team bus.

Despite the tragedy, RCB went ahead with the celebrations inside the stadium from 6.10pm to 6.40pm.

Unfortunately, while about a 5,000-strong posse of policemen was positioned at Vidhana Soudha, a few hundred near Chinnaswamy Stadium were haplessly outnumbered to manage the crowds. CONTINUED ON P2

Fans try to climb a barricade at the stadium on Wednesday | x

CM announces ₹10 lakh compensation

CM Siddaramaiah has ordered a magisterial probe into the stampede. Calling it an "unexpected tragedy", the CM announced `10 lakh as compensation for the victims

Heartrending, PM offers prayers for the injured

PM Narendra Modi termed the stampede as heartrending. "My thoughts are with all those who have lost their loved ones. I pray that those who are injured have a speedy recovery," he stated on X.

Govt ignored advisory against stadium event?

BALA CHAUHAN @ Bengaluru

THE victory celebrations of Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) took a tragic turn on Wednesday with the death of 11 people in Bengaluru after a stampede outside the M Chinnaswamy Stadium where people in lakhs had converged to celebrate the RCB victory by the Karnataka State Cricket Association. The unprecedented tragedy struck barely a kilometre away from the Vidhana Soudha, where the RCB team was being felicitated by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar. The latter had received the team at the HAL Airport.

"The main focus of the police was Vidhana Soudha, where the bandobast for VIPs was being overseen. There were no senior officers on the streets near the stadium to see or assess the crowd flow. This was despite the fact that viral 'media advisory' on social media was doing the rounds since early morning on the itinerary and the public celebration of RCB at Chinnaswamy Stadium. The mob surged from all directions; Kasturba Road, MG Road, Cubbon Road and Cubbon Park Metro station towards the stadium. The numbers were unmanageable and the crowd had far outnumbered the police personnel posted outside the stadium," said sources.

"What was the hurry to celebrate RCB victory and at a closed place? IPL is a private and highly commercial event and what was the need for the government to celebrate it in such a hurried and shoddy manner? If at all, the event could have been better planned, managed and held in an open place like the Palace Grounds a few days down the line. A senior police officer on Wednesday morning had raised a query on the stadium event during a meeting, but it was overlooked," they added.

According to multiple sources on the ground, the deaths occurred as a result of a stampede near the gates. P2

INSIDE

TRIUMPH TURNS INTO TRAGEDY P2
IT WAS COMPLETE CHAOS IN CBD AREAS P3
AFTER ECSTASY, B'LURU MOURNS P15

1 PM The Deputy CM said that they were expecting a huge crowd and that care should be taken

2.30 PM RCB land at HAL Airport in Bengaluru, welcomed by Deputy CM DK Shivakumar

3.14 PM RCB said on social media posts to get free Victory Day Passes from website

3.45–4.15 PM Stampede reported at gates number 3, 8, 12 and 15 in stadium. leaving 11 dead

5 PM RCB reach Vidhana Soudha. Governor, CM, DCM, and others felicitated players

6.10 PM Victory celebrations continue inside the stadium even as stampede toll rises

Nationwide census with caste data to start in March 2027: Home min

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

THE Union home ministry on Wednesday said that the Population Census-2027 will be conducted in two phases along with the enumeration of castes. The first phase will begin on October 1, 2026 and be held in hilly and snow-hit areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. The second phase will cover the rest of the country beginning March 1, 2027, the home ministry notification said.

The exercise is going to be conducted after a delay of seven years, as the decennial census was to be conducted in 2021 but was postponed due to the Covid outbreak besides technical and administrative issues.

"It has been decided to conduct Population Census-2027 in two phases along with enumeration of castes. The reference date for Population Census - 2027 will be 00:00 hours of the first day of March, 2027," the Ministry of Home Affairs said in an official release.

It further said that for Ladakh and the non-synchronous snow-bound areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, "the reference date will be 00.00 hours of the first day of October, 2026". India's population count has been conducted every 10 years since 1951.

The last Census of India was conducted in 2011 in two phases – from April 1 to September 30, 2010 and from February 9-28, 2011. In April, the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi decided that caste-based enumeration would be part of the next Census.

According to the 2011 data, India's total population was 121 crore, the sex ratio was 940 females per 1,000 males, the literacy rate was 74.04% and the population growth was 17.64% from 2001 to 2011.

The Census of India is conducted under the provisions of the Census Act, 1948 and the Census Rules, 1990.

Corruption in judiciary erodes public faith: CJI

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

CHIEF Justice B R Gavai said instances of corruption and misconduct in the Indian judiciary have a negative impact on public confidence, potentially eroding faith and integrity of the system as a whole.

Speaking at a roundtable in the UK Supreme Court in London on Wednesday, CJI Gavai said when instances (of corruption and misconduct) have surfaced in the Indian judiciary, the Supreme Court has dealt it with a heavy hand. His remarks come in the backdrop of burnt wads of cash being recovered from a judge's home. "In India, when such instances have come to light, Supreme Court has taken immediate and appropriate measures to address the misconduct," he said. "Judges must be free from external control," he said.

CJI B R Gavai

EXPRESS READ

Punjab YouTuber held for link with Pak network

Chandigarh: A Punjab-based YouTuber, alleged to be in close touch with influencer Jyoti Malhotra, who is in custody on charges of spying for Pakistan, has been arrested after a "terror-backed espionage network" linking him to Pakistani intelligence was unearthed. Jasbir Singh alias Jaan Mahal (41) was found to be associated with Pakistani intelligence operative Shakir alias Jutt Randhawa | P10

Monsoon session from July 21-August 12

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

A day after 16 opposition parties wrote to PM Modi urging him to convene a special session of Parliament to discuss Operation Sindoor, the Union government on Wednesday said the monsoon session of Parliament will be held from July 21 to August 12.

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju said the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, has recommended the dates. The recommendation will be sent to the President for convening the monsoon session, the minister said.

Taking a dig at the government for announcing the Monsoon session of Parliament 47 days before it is due, the Congress alleged that the government is trying to run away from the demand of the party and INDIA bloc for an immediate special session to discuss the Pahalgam attack and Operation Sindoor.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh, said, "This has been done to run away from the demand made by the Congress and INDIA parties for an immediate special session to discuss Pahalgam attack and failure to bring the terrorists to justice, the impacts of Operation Sindoor and its blatant politicisation, the revelations of the CDS in Singapore, the hyphenation of India and Pakistan, the embedding of China in Pakistan, the claims of President Trump on mediation... The PM will have to answer very tough questions six weeks from now."